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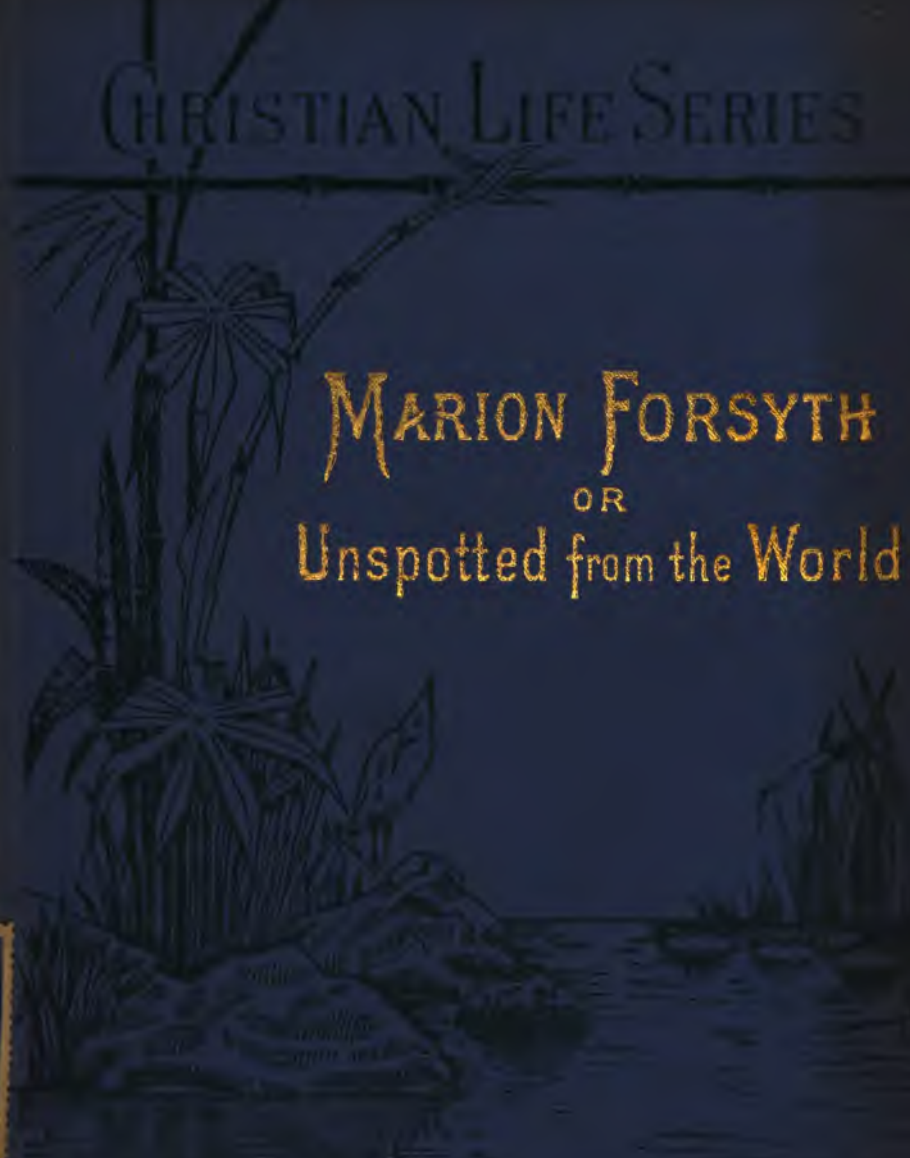

MARION FORSYTH

OR

Unspotted from the World

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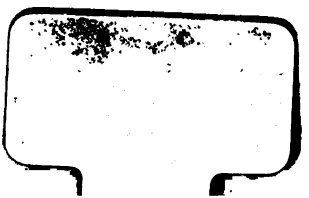

The Christian Life Series.

MARION FORSYTH;

OR,

UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD.

MARION FORSYTH;

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UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD.

BY

ANNIE S. SWAN,
AUTHOR OF "ALDERSYDE."

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MARION FORSYTH;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

On the Threshold.

"Travelling on the pathway,
Where holiest feet have trod,
Groping amid the shadows,
For the broader light of God."

N the pleasant drawing-room of a west-end mansion, on a grey October evening, a young girl sat with her slippered feet on the fender and her eyes dreamily fixed on the dancing flames. Her figure was the perfection of girlish grace; and her face pure, sweet, and refined. It was lit by a pair of lovely grey eyes, shaded by long

eyelashes, and the broad low brow was crowned by a wealth of golden brown hair. Everything about her betokened almost boundless wealth.

She need not have had a care, and yet the deep eyes were strangely shadowed, the sweet face full of anxiety and unrest. What did it mean?

Her white hands were folded upon the pages of an open book, which she had read till the light failed. Was it a volume of poetry, or brilliant essays, or the latest production of the first novelist of the day? None of these. It was the Book of Books, which contains the story, old, yet ever new; and this was not the first time by any means it had stirred the heart of Marion Forsyth, and filled it with a vague unrest. Presently she sat up, stirred the fire to a brighter blaze, and bent her head low over the book. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to *know* the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

On these words Marion Forsyth had pondered

many times, and each time the longing to know and feel their deepest, most precious meaning grew more intense. She had groped long after the light, and was still seeking, seeking. Would peace never come? She had none to guide her faltering feet in the strait and narrow way. She was the child of a wealthy and indulgent father, moving in a gay and fashionable circle, in which religion was seldom mentioned, and regarded as a gloomy thing, suitable for old people and sick-beds. A feeling almost of despair crept over the girl's heart, and she put her hands before her face to keep back the dropping tears.

"Lord, help or I perish!" she whispered very low. Even as the words were uttered the door opened, and there came the rustle of a silken robe in the quiet room. The intruder was a lady, young and very beautiful, bearing sufficient resemblance to Marion Forsyth to proclaim that they were sisters. "Marion, it is half-past six," she exclaimed. "Do you forget we dine at seven, and Douglas will be here in a quarter of an hour? I shall tell him you dreamed of him so long, and would have been dreaming still, if I had not roused you. It is an engrossing thing to have a

lover, *ma chere;* I congratulate myself upon being fancy free."

Marion blushed slightly and rose. As she passed the table she laid her Bible down, and in a moment her sister's hand had closed over it. I wish I could describe to you the expression which came upon Janie Forsyth's face when she read its title. It was almost comical in its intensity of incredulous amazement.

"Marion, dear, are you ill?" To her frivolous mind that question expressed the only possible explanation.

"Why should reading the Bible be considered a sure sign of failing health, Janie?" asked her sister with a faint smile. Miss Forsyth shrugged her dainty shoulders, and turned to admire the sweep of her train.

"You grow more eccentric every day, Marion. Not content with toiling at soup-kitchens and charity bazaars, and visiting poor people in places it makes me shudder even to think of, you take to reading the Bible in the drawing-room. We shall have you abjuring our harmless amusements next; and then

it will be told in Gath that the belle of the season has become converted."

"I only wish it could be said of me with truth now, Janie," said Marion Forsyth, in tones of almost painful longing. "To be able to say I am a saved sinner is an honour I court far above the one you have given me."

Miss Forsyth drew herself up, and stared at her sister in blank amazement.

"I don't know what has come to you, Marion," she said sharply, for those dulcet tones *could* be very sharp sometimes. "I am growing tired of such cant. Let me advise you not to let papa hear you talk like that. And what do you suppose Mr. Gilroy would say to such sentiments?"

The last words went straight as an arrow to the mark, and Marion answering nothing, quitted the room and went upstairs to dress. Her heart was very heavy, for she knew that in her strivings after a higher and better life she could not depend for help or guidance on the man whose promised wife she was. Nay, more, she guessed that from him would come the most strenuous opposition. Douglas Gilroy was

essentially a man of the world, devoting the time he could spare from an extensive business to the frivolous amusements of the society to which his position gave him entrance. Marion Forsyth had been his promised wife for a year, and she loved him as much as such women love, unselfishly and devotedly, caring for him above all else on earth. He was worthy her choice, so they said. Handsome, agreeable, rich, and generous, what more could woman's heart desire? Ah! these things could not satisfy Marion Forsyth. She had begun of late to miss something in her life. When she had first felt the craving for the one thing needful, she had gone in her womanly pride and confidence to her promised husband, and he had laughed at her, and teased her, and called her "little saint." Douglas Gilroy did not dream that these few bantering contemptuous words had severed one link in the chain, had lowered him in the eyes of the woman who loved him, and had closed the well-springs of her confidence to him for ever.

In the dressing-room the maid waited impatiently for her mistress, wondering to see her so indifferent about what she should wear, and how she should look.

"Anything, anything, Lizzie," said the young lady listlessly, in answer to the girl's question. "I don't mind what I wear."

"Are you quite well, Miss Marion?"

"Yes," answered her mistress, then a momentary light sprang to her eyes, for on the dressing-table lay an exquisite bouquet of half-blown buds, and it did not need the note beside them to tell her whence they came. While the maid brushed and braided her hair she conned the loving tender words, forgetting for a moment the burden on her mind. Surely never had girl been loved so devotedly, so tenderly and truly before. Not a day passed without bringing some evidence of his unceasing thought of her.

But for one thing she would have been the happiest woman in the world.

Tardy though she had been, she was dressed in time, and went down to the drawing-room to find her lover and her sister in close conversation. They were talking of her she felt sure, and there was evident constraint in the greeting Douglas Gilroy gave her. Upon her sister's entrance, Miss Forsyth discreetly left the room. There was a few minutes' constrained silence.

"Are you vexed with me about anything, Douglas," Marion asked timidly.

"Not vexed exactly, but worried and annoyed by what Janie has just told me," said Douglas Gilroy, looking down gravely from his tall height into the sweet serious face of his betrothed. "It is not true, Marion?" he said inquiringly.

"What? Ask me a plain question, Douglas, and I shall answer it truly," she said simply.

"That you are bent on being converted, bent on giving up your sweet young life to gloomy religion?"

"There must be no concealment between us, Douglas," she said with quivering lip; "it is true that I cannot, will not, rest till I have found peace with God."

Douglas Gilroy bit his lip to keep back something which sprang to them. But his brow darkened, and there was nothing but stern displeasure in those eyes which Marion Forsyth had been wont to see look upon her only in tenderness.

"I thought you had forgotten or laid aside those unhealthy morbid ideas," he said in a hard cold voice. "If you love me try to banish them for ever."

She turned and hid her face on the hand which rested on her chair.

"Douglas, Douglas, don't look at me with those eyes. I do love you; but I dare not, dare not set you, as I fear I have done hitherto, in the place of God."

The door opens to admit some of her father's guests, and the painful scene was at an end. The dinner passed, the evening was spent pleasantly in the drawing-room; but never once again did Douglas Gilroy approach his betrothed. The guests noted it of course, and attributed it to a lover's quarrel. It lay deeper than that, for the happiness of two lives was trembling in the balance. What wonder that while Marion played for their guests her fingers trembled on the keys, and her eyes grew dim and shadowed with a mist of tears.

The clouds were gathering round her life, and in the distance she saw the approach of an ordeal which as yet her woman's heart dared not face.

CHAPTER II.

Into the Light.

"A kind of sacredness
Seemed hallowing the place—
For Christ Himself was there."

SHE was dying, the doctor had just told her, and she was at peace. Nay, more, her face shone with a strange, deep gladness, for were not the pain and weariness, the dreary days and drearier nights, to be quenched soon in the light and joy which are beyond? She was very young; her feet had just touched the threshold of womanhood; life might have been sweet to her, yet it was only a burden she was unutterably thankful to lay down. She was one of those whom we speak and write of compassionately as the "very poor." During her brief nineteen years she had endured hunger, and

homelessness, and lovelessness; and had grown old before her time. Her mother had died in giving her birth; her father, in his intervals of freedom from jail, was the terror of her life; she had neither brother nor sister, nor other kindred in the world. Could life be very sweet to her? From her earliest years she had earned her own scanty livelihood; she had picked up a knowledge of sewing from a friendly neighbour, and in her later years had earned a few shillings making coarse shirts for a warehouse in the city. With failing health, the work had been badly done, and after several complaints from her employers it was taken from her. It did not matter to them that they took the bread from the girl's mouth—they could not afford to pay for any but the best work. In her extremity, when sin or death stared her in the face, Marion Forsyth, bent upon her errands of mercy in that dark squalid place, found her and saved her. Out of the liberal allowance of pocket-money Mr. Forsyth bestowed upon his daughters, Marion paid the rent of the girl's room, put a few comforts in it, paid a woman to look after her, and kept her in everything. Then when the

doctor told the kind-hearted young lady his patient had not many days to live, she opened her Bible tremblingly, and tried to point her to the hope for eternity. Yes, she did it, even while her own soul was seeking a blessing; and more, she led the dying girl home to her Saviour. Do you think such a thing impossible? It is not. I have known instances of it, and I believe many a one out of his or her own experience could tell the same story. Then in her turn Marion Forsyth was taught of her poor ignorant sister —poor and ignorant compared with her; but oh, how much richer in her bright and perfect trust in the Friend of sinners.

Marion Forsyth came nearly every day to that wretched little court, and was the very sunshine of the sick room while she stayed. One afternoon towards the end of October she wended her way as usual up the narrow lane, uttering a pleasant good-afternoon to the slatternly women at the doors, or pausing to pat some dirty-faced urchin on the head. She was known in Blinder's Court now, and reverenced. The roughest among them would not have harmed a hair of her head. She was not one of those (Christians,

shall I call them?) who come with their noses in the air and their skirts drawn tightly round them, as if to save them from contamination, and who gingerly offer a tract to a fellow-creature starving, perhaps, for a mouthful of bread.

My friends, you won't save souls in that way. Don't think it.

Such dealing with the poor is worse than useless; it hardens. They want some one to go into their homes, and sit down with them, among their dirt, and misery, and hopelessness, and talk to them; ay, even as the Master talked with the publicans and sinners. That was Marion Forsyth's way, and she had done more good in Blinder's Court than if she had distributed a million tracts. I do not say that tracts are not instruments for good; but I *do* say that to offer one to a starving man, who perhaps cannot read it, is folly.

Marion Forsyth carried her basket with her. It contained grapes, and jelly, and a bunch of flowers for the sick girl. The woman watching by the bed heard the young lady's foot on the stair, and came to the door with her finger on her lip.

"She's sleepin', ma'am, a wee bit blink; it's God-sent, for she's suffered sair a' day."

Marion nodded, and silently followed the woman into the room, and setting her basket on the table, sat down by the bedside to wait her awakening. The pale face on the pillow was drawn, and haggard, and wasted to the last degree. Her breath came in short quick gasps, and she would start every minute or so, as if haunted by some unpleasant dream.

"Has the doctor been, Mrs. Scott?" asked Marion in a whisper.

Light as it was it awoke the sleeper, and she opened her eyes. She smiled at the sight of the sweet face by her pillow, and tried to hold out her hand; but the strength was not sufficient even for so slight an effort.

"How are you to-day, Jessie?"

"Weak, weak," she whispered back. "Slippin' fast awa' hame. Eh, Miss Mar'n, but the rest'll be sweet an' soun' the nicht."

"To-night, Jessie?"

"Ay, He thinks I've suffered eneuch, sae He's comin' the nicht. Jist read that bonnie bit, Miss

Mar'n, aboot nae mair pain; eh, but I like it, it's the best bit o' the Bible."

Marion Forsyth opened her Bible and read slowly and distinctly the beautiful verses in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, which are so fraught with promise and consolation to every suffering heart on earth.

"Eh, Miss Mar'n, I'll be lookin' for ye on the shinin' shore," said the dying girl drowsily. "Ye'll mebbe get a braw welcome hame, but nane'll be truer than mine."

Suddenly Marion Forsyth's head went down upon the coverlet, and a cry escaped her lips.

"Jessie, Jessie, teach me the way! Give me some of your faith! I cannot see nor feel, it is all dark."

A great wonderment came on the girl's face, and she stretched out one feeble hand till it touched the bowed head.

"Lord, mak the dark place licht," she whispered. "Show her Thysel, even as I see Thee. She's Thy ain an' disna ken it. She wants tae ken. Gie her the peace that I hae, for Jesus' sake."

At that moment the doctor entered, and Marion rose and shook hands with him quietly; though he

wondered what was the meaning of the look on her face. He glanced at his patient, touched her pulse, and shook his head.

"Dinna be fear'd tae tell me, doctor," said she, smiling; "it'll be the best news ye ever tell, if ye say I'm gaun hame."

"It won't be long now, Jessie," he said with an answering smile. "This takes the sting from what is so often the doctor's painful duty."

He did not stay, for his help could avail nothing now. He went from her to the bedside of a rich old man, who would have given half his fortune for another day of life. He was not ready to die, and his mind wandered so that he could not fix it upon anything for a minute at a time. Is it wise to leave salvation till the last days, my friends? Is it *safe?*

Marion Forsyth took off her bonnet and sat down again by the bed. Janie knew where she was. They would guess why she stayed so long. Jessie dozed again, and Marion watched by her pillow, feeling with a strange awe that there was another watcher with her —Him who has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

For twenty minutes there was perfect stillness in the room, broken only by the irregular breathing of the sleeper, and the ticking of Marion's watch on the table. Suddenly Jessie turned and stretched out her hands. No word escaped her lips, but her eyes were eloquent, her whole face radiant with the light of the coming heaven. With a last effort she turned her eyes on Marion's face, and pointed upward. That was the end; but it seemed to Marion that as the glad soul passed through the gates, they stood ajar a moment, and the light streamed down into the room. It entered her soul, and created a strange sense of joy and peace unutterable. She bent her head on her hands and prayed—only these words—

"My Lord and my God."

Ay, He was hers. The dark place was made light, as the dying girl had prayed, and Marion Forsyth saw the King in His beauty, the chief of ten thousand and altogether lovely.

"Dear Lord, the shadows flee,
And now I *surely* know
That Thou hast died for me."

CHAPTER III.

Gathering Clouds.

"A shadow cometh up
And lieth darkly on the heart,
And blended lives drift far apart."

ONE morning early in December Janie Forsyth came dancing into the breakfast-room with an open letter in her hand.

Marion was standing at the fire; Mr. Forsyth had not yet left his dressing-room.

"Marion, here is a card for Mrs. Robertson's calico ball at Broadhurst, on Christmas eve," she cried gaily. 'Isn't it delightful? All the world will be there!"

Marion Forsyth did not look particularly elated over the invitation. The gay season was commencing,

and with it her trials. She had never cared much for the crowded assemblies in which her sister's heart rejoiced, and now she had other things to engross her attention, other work to do.

"What character will you choose? I intend to personate our Queen Mary. Talking of it to Mr. Gilroy the other evening, he advised me to do it, and said I would make an ideal queen. Your lover is an adept in the art of compliment-paying, Marion."

Still Marion did not speak.

"What *are* you thinking of, Marion? Can nothing interest you?"

"Yes, I was wondering, Janie," said Marion, in a low voice, "whether papa would be very angry if I stayed at home from this ball."

"And why, pray, should you stay at home? Why, it is the event of the year! *Not* to have been at Broadhurst on Christmas eve will be accounted little short of a crime in our circle."

"I don't care for such things, Janie," pleaded Marion.

"Marion, this religion is spoiling you utterly and entirely. I wonder if you never pause to think how

very unbecoming it is for you to set up above the rest of us as an example of holiness? Is it right, is it respectful to our dear father, who, I am sure, is the best one ever girls had?"

Marion was bewildered. She had nothing to say in answer to such arguments. She was a very young Christian yet, only struggling to get her feet firmly planted in the right way. Her sister ready of wit and glib of tongue, could present things to her in so many new lights that she grew confused. The entrance of Mr. Forsyth interrupted the conversation for a few minutes. But Miss Forsyth was eager to have the affair settled at once.

"Papa, only guess! Marion actually wants to return Mrs. Robertson's invitation to the calico ball! She turns a deaf ear to my talking. Do settle the matter for us."

Mr. Forsyth peeped over his newspaper into the face of his younger daughter.

"Hey, what's this? don't want to go to the great ball? Nonsense, nonsense! You'll both go, of course, though I suppose it will be another heavy bill for me to pay. Never mind, never mind," added the

indulgent father; "if my girls look well I don't mind what's to pay."

Jane glanced triumphantly at her sister, who bit her lip, and held down her head. She was too timid yet to appeal against her father's decision. After breakfast she escaped upstairs to her own room for a few quiet minutes. Against such odds how could she keep herself unspotted from the world? Hitherto the only cloud upon her life had been her mother's death; all the rest had been like a summer sky. She was not inured to trial, and this one looming in the distance seemed a very real and hard one to her. She opened her beloved Bible for consolation, and as her eye wandered listlessly over the pages they were chained by these words: "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

She was rebuked, and humbled, and made ashamed. All these things Paul had gloried to endure for Christ's

sake, and *she* shrank from and chafed under a few sharp words. She knelt down there and prayed very earnestly for strength and patience to endure persecution, if need be, and not to endure only but glory in suffering for Him who loved her with an everlasting love. Then peace came, and she returned to the drawing-room, her sweet face unclouded again, and her eyes serene.

Miss Forsyth was looking over some new music and merely glanced up when her sister entered the room, not offering to speak. Though they were sisters, and had never been apart in their lives, they had nothing in common. The day passed, as other days did: Miss Forsyth idling the hours away, wishing for some talkative caller to come and beguile the time; while Marion took the car to the city to carry the light of her presence into dark and cheerless homes, and to come back strengthened and encouraged to go on in the Lord's work.

Janie was entertaining a caller when she reached her home again, and Mr. Forsyth had just returned, the servant said. Hearing the visitor's name, and not caring particularly to meet her, Marion ran upstairs,

changed her dress, and came down to the library. Her father was there leaning back in his easy chair calculating the profits of a successful investment.

"Hallo, pussy! come here and tell me why you didn't want to go to the ball?" he said in his genial way when he saw her enter.

She went over to the rug and knelt down beside him, clasping her hands on his knee.

"Papa, if you saw what I saw to-day, what I see every day I go to the city, you would scarcely ask me," she said, summoning all her courage to speak out boldly for the Master. "It seems to me that there is no time to dance and make merry when there are so many souls and bodies perishing at our very doors."

"There are work-houses and city missions, my dear," said Mr. Forsyth, vaguely.

His daughter shook her head.

"Yes; but if there were triple the number of such institutions in Glasgow, papa, there would still be needing ones."

"My little girl, I don't want you to grow morbid and gloomy over such things; they are inevitable," he

said. "Draw on me as often as you like for money to give to them, but don't go so much among them till all your young life is saddened and embittered. Preserve your gaiety of heart, my love, and enjoy life while you can."

"Papa, I am very happy. I have found the secret of true happiness. I am not morbid or gloomy, only anxious to do what I can for Jesus. Dear papa, don't hinder me, don't make me take part in all these gaieties for which I have no inclination. I will be a better daughter to you, God helping me, than I have ever been; but if you love me, let me please myself in these things. It is a light matter to you; it is a great one to me."

The impassioned voice, the sweet shining eyes bent so earnestly on his face, stirred some chord in his heart, and brought back the memory of the dear, dead wife, whose living image the kneeling girl was.

"Please yourself, my darling. Stay at home or go as you will, nobody shall meddle with you; only don't grow into a solemn, long-faced old woman all at once, or I shall have to exercise my authority in another way."

She rose up, and laying her arms about his neck, kissed him, and he felt a tear upon his cheek—thanks more eloquent than a multitude of words.

"What will Gilroy say to your becoming a recluse, eh?" he asked jocularly. Marion's heart sank. Not yet had she faced this part of the question.

"I won't have you treating him badly, mind," he said, with a slight sternness. "He hasn't been here so often of late. If you have had a lover's quarrel, make it up, in case I step in and do it for you."

"Papa, would it be a great disappointment to you if I did not became Mr. Gilroy's wife?" she said, not knowing what prompted the question.

"Disappointment, eh?" repeated Mr. Forsyth, sharply. "I shouldn't like to be called upon to bear it. Many a Glasgow man would give his right hand to call Gilroy son-in-law, and many a daughter would gladly step into your shoes, my lady. There are not many Gilroys in the world; be careful how you treat him."

Marion had heard enough and slipped from the room.

Douglas Gilroy came that night to Rowan View, and

Marion was left alone with him in the drawing-room.

"Janie told me about the invitations, Marion," he said, by-and-by. "What is my little girl going to astonish the natives with?"

She looked up and tried to meet his eyes bravely.

"I am not going, Douglas."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true."

"May I ask why, Marion?"

"Because, since I have found peace, I do not care for such things, Douglas." She nerved herself to say, "It is not that I think they are sinful in themselves, but the time and thought they engross might be better occupied."

"Upon my word, this is too absurd. It is beyond all suffrance."

Douglas Gilroy spoke angrily, as he felt, and strode up and down the room—a sure sign of mental agitation.

"Where are you going to place a limit to this fanatical folly, Marion? What will be the next act in the comedy?"

She loved him, and the sneering tone cut her like a knife.

"Douglas! can you give me any reason why you should talk to me so unkindly?" she asked with quivering lip.

"Reason! why their name is legion! We shall have you the laughing-stock of our friends next. Where is the harm in a dance or an evening party? What contamination can you get at the theatre when such women as Siddons and Miss Terry are on the stage? Answer me these questions Marion."

"I do not presume to sit in judgment on others, Douglas. It is for myself alone I claim a right to decide."

"And supposing you were my wife, what then?"

"My conscience would be my own still," she said, falteringly.

"Which means that my wishes would have no weight where they happened to clash with your whims. Does your Bible not teach wifely duty as part of its creed?"

"Douglas! Douglas!"

The pleading cry smote him to the heart, for she

was very dear to him. He went to her and took her in his strong arms, whispering words of impassioned tenderness which in days gone by had been like heavenly music to her heart.

The shadow had deepened, was deepening every day. Would it deepen still till it made a great gulf between them and sundered their hearts for ever?

CHAPTER IV.

Sundered.

"Life hath many a bitter moment,
Fraught with these heart-probing pains."

IN the early spring-time the Forsyths repaired to their coast residence at Rothesay. Both girls were glad of the change. Miss Forsyth was exhausted with the winter's round of pleasure, and Marion's tired eyes longed for the beauty and peace of their country home. Oh, but it was beautiful! All the earth had sprung into a life of exquisite freshness and promise. Trees and hedgerows wore their most exquisite hues, primrose and anemone carpeted the glens and grew thickly on every bank. Beneath the budding hedgerows heart's-ease and crimson-tipped gowans awoke beneath the sun's kiss, birds made their melody on every bough, and

the sunny river, ever beautiful, lapped the shore, and spoke in Marion's heart like the voice of the great Creator. The past winter had been an eventful one for Marion Forsyth. Over rough and stony ground, through ridicule and heart-probing taunts, His grace had been sufficient for her, and she had been kept from falling.

The younger Miss Forsyth and her eccentricities was a never-failing subject for conversation among those who knew or had known her in her "sensible" days, and it was a matter of excited conjecture whether or not her engagement with Douglas Gilroy was likely to be ratified in the summer, as had been arranged. Opinion was divided; none dared question Mr. Gilroy, and only time would set all curiosity at rest. He had not again spoken to his betrothed on the subject on which they could never hope to agree. He still came to Rowan View; outsiders could detect no change, but Marion knew the difference in his manner. That a crisis was at hand she knew; she also guessed Mr. Gilroy only waited till they had left the city with its prying eyes, and then he would speak. She was right. One evening in the early days of May

the steamer brought him as a passenger to Rothesay, and after dinner he asked her if she could spare an hour for him. How different the polite request from the old lover-like appropriation! Do you wonder her fingers trembled as she wrapped her shawl about her; and that her heart was as heavy as lead? He offered her his arm in silence, and they turned their faces through the shrubbery to the woods behind the house. Far down among the trees there was a mossy bank, where in summers gone they had spent many a happy hour. They walked the familiar way in silence, and in silence seated themselves; and Marion began nervously to play with the fringes of her shawl.

"This is the 8th of May," said Douglas Gilroy, standing beside her and looking down upon her with unfathomable eyes.

"Yes," she answered, almost in a whisper.

"Our wedding-day was fixed for the 27th of July, Marion. Is it to be?"

"I don't know."

"No more do I."

There was a brief silence.

"We must have an explanation to-night, Marion,

and come to a perfect understanding with each other. Do you hear?"

Ay, she heard.

"Do you still care for me?"

She raised her eyes to his face in simple, wondering surprise. Looking at her, he need not wait for an answer. It was plainly written on her face.

"Will you be my wife, as you promised, on the 27th of July?" he asked. He had schooled himself to these cold, business-like tones. He meant to have the mastery, or give her up; yet he loved her. Does the thing seem absurd? It has its parallel around you every day.

"We must understand each other, as you say, Douglas," she said calmly. "Will you tell me exactly what you will expect of me as your wife?"

He waited a moment.

"Nothing unreasonable. I will expect you to make a home where my friends will be welcome at all hours, and that you will not for a punctilio refuse to accept their hospitality. If I do not care to appear in my box at the theatre without you, is that unreasonable? And if I do not choose that you should expose your-

self to needless risk in the vilest places in the city, is that unreasonable? You shall have unlimited means to give to the poor. You can head subscription lists with what sum you please, go to whatever church you may like best—that is all I expect of you.

She sat perfectly still.

"Do you know what you are asking me to give up for you, Douglas?" she asked, by-and-by, wondering at her own calm.

"I have weighed my words before they were uttered, Marion, and I fail to see I am asking anything which a reasonable woman cannot conscientiously grant."

Again there was a silence.

"Marion!"—his voice took all the old persuasive tenderness—"my darling, why spoil both our lives? Cannot my wife trust herself with me? Am I such a reprobate that, like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, I shall make Israel to sin?"

A strange conflict was waging in the girl's mind.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," said Paul; and yet again, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife." All the woman

within her pled for him, for she loved him well. Might she not by her walk and conversation make him also see the beauty of holiness, and lead him to his God? Her heart thrilled at the thought; but again these words rose up before her like a chill wind from the sea, "Ye may not do evil that good may come."

She knew her own weakness; how easily this man, whose mental calibre was infinitely stronger than hers, could influence her and mould her to his will. The question to be decided now was simply—God or man. She rose, shivering slightly, and lifted eyes full of pain to his face.

"Douglas! you believe in God, in Christ; how can you ask such hard things from me?"

"What evidence have you that there is a God or a Christ?" asked Douglas Gilroy, abruptly.

He did not know what made him ask the question.

She looked at him as if she had not heard aright.

"Douglas! what are you saying? What did you say?" she asked.

"I said what evidence have you of the existence of God?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"I must doubt what I cannot prove."

In the greatness of her surprise she was for a moment unable to speak. Careless, indifferent to religion she had known him to be, but that he had gone so far astray was a revelation to her. And in two months' time she might have been the wife of a man who denied the existence of his God!

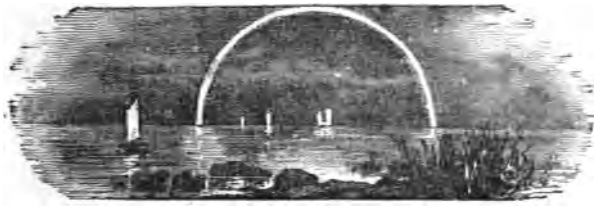
"I suppose I have passed the rubicon now?" he said lightly. "I await your sentence. Is everything at an end between us?"

She bowed her head so low that he could not see how wan her face grew, nor how her eyes were dim with pain.

"I hope your Master will be to you what I would have been, had you thought me worthy of you. For, as I live, I loved you as man never loved woman before, and would die to serve you. You are like the rest of your sex, as fickle as the wind. I was a fool to set so much store upon such a flimsy chance of happiness."

So without one kindly look or word, without a touch of the hand, or a farewell kiss, he left her. And

she crept away home. She entered the house without being observed, and went upstairs to her own room, locking the door behind her. Daylight was gone now, but it was not dark in the room. The window was open ; she moved mechanically to it and knelt down, her hands clasped upon the sill. What a plenitude of loveliness there was in a summer night ! Upon the placid water the young May moon had lit a shimmering pathway, and above the grey peaks of Arran many stars were shining. It is a curious thing that in our moments of keenest pain our eyes are quick to note the minutest detail of our surroundings. She had been brave outside, but her courage failed her here. Her conscience was at rest, but her heart was like to break. Ah ! we women cannot give up such things without a struggle. God knows what it costs us. But there are no waters so deep, no storm so wild but that we can hear, through the tumults, the voice of Him who calmed the waves on Galilee, "*Peace, be still !*"



CHAPTER V.

For His Sake.

"Take my life, and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee!"
FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

I MAKE no comment on Marion Forsyth's action at this crisis in her life. Perhaps you cannot find it in your heart to justify it; but as the story happened, so it must be told. She had counted the cost, faced the case in all its bearings, and made her decision. Mr. Forsyth was furious, Janie surprised and scornful, and all the world wondered and shrugged its shoulders over the girl's folly. Hard days followed for her. She had to bear estrangement from kindred, polite expressive regret and astonishment from outside friends, and an aching void in her own heart, which told her how it had been set on Douglas Gilroy.

Nobody guessed how the rupture had affected him; he was not one of those who wear their feelings on their sleeves. The quietness and enforced idleness in Rothesay became unbearable to Marion, and she returned to Rowan View alone before the season was half over. She must have work—something to keep her from brooding over the past. In these days of loneliness and heartache, Marion Forsyth drew very near to the Master for whom the sacrifice had been made. He bound up the aching heart, gave strength to endure, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

In September her father and sister returned to the city to find her busy and happy; her sweet face serene and unclouded, and her eyes without a shadow in their depths. But she was treated with coldness still. Mr. Forsyth did not seem able to forgive her for inflicting such disappointment needlessly upon him. He did not interfere with her in any way. She was at liberty to go where and do what she pleased. Neither of them expressed the least interest in her proceedings. She was treated like a stranger in her own home; and was never included in their plans

nor consulted on any subject. It was very hard; almost more than she could bear. But by the grace of God she was enabled to continue steadfast in the faith, and bear noble testimony for the Lord she had elected to serve. She had been a dutiful daughter all her life; but now her tenderness, and thoughtfulness, and loving, watchful care for her father's comfort, were wonderful to see. No word of complaint or bitterness escaped her gentle lips; no glance of reproach was ever seen upon her face. In her inmost heart Janie marvelled at her long-suffering, and secretly respected the religion which was its mainspring. The servants worshipped the younger daughter of the house, and in many a city home her name was mentioned as they might mention that of an angel. That was what the world saw. But there were hours of fierce struggling; of hard, bitter rebellion, when her heart cried out for the human love she had put away from her. There were days when the lamp of faith burned so dimly that she was in despair. She could not always touch God's hand through the gloom. He tried His child to the utmost limit of her endurance. Apparently indifferent and unobservant, Mr. Forsyth watched his

daughter closely through the ensuing year, his heart yearning over her unspeakably, even while his face and voice were cold and stern. She had ever been his dearest; her mother's soul looked out upon him from those gentle eyes. And in the silence of his own chamber the worldly man pondered often what manner of religion this must be which could make such a sensitive spirit brave to endure ridicule and reviling, persecution and estrangement, and to keep herself unspotted from the world.

Before the year closed, Miss Forsyth made a brilliant marriage, and went forth to a home of her own. It was Marion's hope that when she was left at home alone with her father the barrier between them might be swept away, and that she might become, as in the old fond days, his "dear little daughter, the sunshine of his heart." When the last guest was gone upon the evening of the wedding-day, and father and daughter were left together in the deserted drawing-room, Marion stood in the window watching him sitting by the fire, and longed to throw herself on his breast, and to hear him call her his "little girl," as he used to do.

His face was buried in his hands. She thought he was overcome with the parting he had endured that day, and it swept across her heart with a bitter pain that he could have given her up without a pang. She crept over to him, and knelt down by his chair, and put her face on his arm.

"Papa, I am left," she sobbed; "have you not a word to say to me? I am your daughter, too."

For answer he drew the drooping head close to his breast; and she felt his tears falling on her hands.

"Can you forgive your old father, my darling?" he said, brokenly; but there was no need to ask. "When you broke with Gilroy," he went on by-and-by, "I was furious, and I swore I should make you rue it. I was curious, too, to see how long this religion would last—how it would befriend you when everything else failed. I have watched you when you thought I never saw. I have marvelled at your angel patience, at the heroic endurance of what I knew must have been a bitter trial to you. I have seen it all, my darling, and I want to learn the religion which makes such things easy to bear. I am a poor, ignorant old man, hardened in the world's

ways; but God will deal gently with me for your sake. Teach me the way; lead me to your Saviour and help me to make a better use of the last days of my life.

Surely "though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning."

* * * * *

In course of time Douglas Gilroy married a rich and fashionable wife; and to-day the world envies him and calls him a happy man. The heart of man is known only to himself and his God.

In Rowan View there abides a solitary woman, whose name is sacred to many a heart in Glasgow—the first freshness of her womanhood gone, her hair streaked with grey, her face worn a little and sad, as the faces of good women are, who have passed through many sorrows.

Her life is simply a literal fulfilment of the prayer—

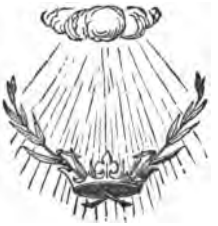
> "Take my life, and let it be,
> Consecrated, Lord, to Thee!"

Health, wealth, time and talents have all been sacrificed in His service. The results of such perfect self-

abnegation, such almost superhuman working, may not be estimated here. The day will reveal them.

This is not a fancy sketch; it is truth. The vineyard is large, the labourers few. Are there any who, for Christ's sake, are ready to work for Him with earnestness and singleness of heart, keeping themselves unspotted from the world?

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."



ALL THINE.

My God, I do not know
What coming years may hold for me,
And what my future days may be,
Thou hast it so.

Some day now drawing near,
I may be called to bid farewell
To all that I have loved so well,
And lived for here.

Or there may be for me
Long years which hold a cross of pain,
And I may prove all hopes in vain
Unless of Thee.

I cannot hope to have
A life entirely free from care;
Ah, no! earth's burden I must bear
Down to the grave.

I would not ask from Thee
That life should be a summer day;
That there should grow upon the way
No thorns for me.

But I would humbly pray
That I might labour on for Thee,
With gladness till the shadows flee
At break of day.

I could not bear to sit
With folded hands upon the field,
And yet, my Father, I must yield
If Thou seest fit.

I leave myself with Thee,
My life, my hope, my all, are Thine,
I would not seek to call them mine,
I love to be

All Thine. 'Tis passing sweet,
To feel Thee nearer every day,
Till all my cares and hopes I lay
At Thy dear feet.

FAITH.

LORD give us faith, a perfect faith,
A patient trust in Thee,
When in the shadowed ways of life,
Thy light we cannot see.

Like children, Lord, we fain would be
Obeying Thy command;
Knowing no evil can befall,
When we are in Thy hand.

Thou knowest what temptations sore,
What sins beset us here,
And how the strait and narrow way
Seems harder year by year.

How restlessly we chafe and fret
Against Divinest will,
Even when the Saviour's voice, in love
Is whispering, "Peace, be still."

We fain would leave ourselves with Thee,
And cast on Thee our care,
Thou art our Father, blessèd thought,
And wilt our burden share.

So give us, Lord, abundantly,
A baptism from above,
A child-like confidence in Thee,
A new day-spring of love.

A humble, contrite heart to say,
Thy way, not ours, is best,
And at the last, a welcome home,
To Thine own blessed rest.

LONGINGS.

ACHING heads are drooping
'Neath the burden of the years;
Hearts are growing a-weary,
And eyes are dim with tears.

Souls sick of worldly pleasure,
Of worldly care and strife,
Full with unsatisfied longings
For a nobler and better life.

Feet tremble on the threshold
Where holiest steps have trod,
Groping amid the darkness
For the broader light of God.

And feeble hands uplifted
On God's wide altar stair,
Ask mutely for the blessing
Of the great all-Father's care.

Weak, erring, faulty, and feeble,
Thou knowest us every one;
Poor honour we give to our Master,
Yet Father, we are Thine own.

Stretch out Thy hand in the darkness,
And make Thy weak ones strong;
Life's burdens are so heavy,
The days so sad and long.

Give Thy sweet leaves of healing
To every toil-worn one;
And when the shadows flee away,
Lead unto light Thine own.

FROM THE DEPTHS.

IN this sad world of ours—
This dreary wilderness of care and pain,
This mystery, this turmoil of unrest,
This rough and stony pathway to the tomb,
Where many tears and blurring shadows fall—
How sweet, O Lord, to know that we are Thine:
That in Thy hand this mighty chaos lies;
That thine the key of this great mystery—
We could not bear it else!

For as the years go by
One sorrow makes a strange, prepared way
For yet another; one by one our joys
Are wrested from us ere we call them ours;
And sweetest human ties are severed wide.
And sweetest human cares slip from our grasp;
And dear home nests are robbed of all the birds,

And family trees are stripped of flower and leaf;
And many graves lie greenly side by side,
And oceans roll between some we hold dear;—
Till with sad folded hands we sit and say,
How can God have it so?
For human hearts will cry out for their loves,
And human eyes seek dumbly for the smiles
Of angel faces gone.

God pity us!
Oh wrap us in the fulness of Thy love!
In infinite compassion lay Thy hand
Upon our hearts and make them very still,
And since the cross is Thine, oh help us bear
It very patiently, until that blessed morn
When all the shades of night shall flee away,
When we shall clasp again the loved and lost,
And every severed bond shall join again;
Where in the light that circles round the throne
In all His beauty all shall see the King!

UNREST.

THERE could not be
More blessed rest for weary heart or brain,
Than the hush'd beauty of this April eve—
Its whispering breeze, its shyly opening flowers,
Its twittering birds, its softly budding trees.
Its promise glad of summer days to come.

Yet I, who love all these with strong, deep love,
Look on them with unseeing eye to-night.
My restless spirit chafes amid deep rest,
And longs for rush of wild, free wind of Heav'n,
On lightning wings o'er some lone mountain peak;
For voice of ocean, sounding through the night;
For gleam of darkling billow tipped with foam;
For an infinite something, grand and strong,
Wherein to hide this poor, weak, trembling self.
O Christ! who stilled the waves on Galilee,
Lay kind, calm hands upon my aching brain.
In Thy great heart of love quench my unrest,
And guide my faltering feet straight home to Thee.

REST.

OUT in the battlefield amid the strife,
Encompassed by doubts, distressed by fears,
Oft groping in dark hours through falling tears
For the deep "wherefore" of this earthly life.
In the sore heat and burden of the day,
We cannot always touch our Father's hand,
Nor lift our thought into the other land,
Nor feel that His is aye the better way.
Therefore for all I hold it still to be
A good and fitting thing to dwell apart
A little while, to rest the weary heart,
Among the hills or by the summer sea,
To let the earth-bound spirit soar above,
And read from nature's book that God is love.

THANKSGIVING.

HERE in the darkened room,
While on the hearth the fire is low,
And at my feet the moonbeams throw
Long shadows through the gloom.

I fain would quiet be,
To dream awhile of days long gone,
And count the mercies one by one
My God hath given to me.

I thank Thee, Lord, to-night
That health and strength have bless'd my days,
And smoothed for me life's rougher ways,
And made my labour light.

And I would thank Thee, too,
For that rich gift vouchsafed to me,
And that I can so plainly see
The work that I should do.

I thank Thee for my home,
For all its present happiness,
And for those precious memories
Which all to Thee are known;

And for that other love,
Now of my life so sweet a part,
Which has so richly blessed my heart,
I raise my song above.

And though my tears fall fast,
I thank Thee, too, for that quiet grave,
And that the swell of sorrow's wave
Thy hand hath stilled at last.

It is so sweet to know
That, safe within the city's gates,
On Thy fair shore our mother waits
The time that we shall go.

So it is sweet to me
To thank Thee, Lord, that thou hast given
So dear a link 'twixt earth and heaven
To bind my heart to Thee.

WAITING.

LONG seems the day,
To waiting ones upon a lonely shore,
When dear ones gone a little while before
Call us away.
Though every day rich blessings come and go,
Though life's grey by-paths are sometimes aglow
With the soft radiance of many a smile,
And though God's sun is shining yet awhile,
Still there will come,
When hearts grow sick and weary of the strife,
A great sad longing for a fuller life;
A dearer home,
Where never shadows fall athwart the glow,
Where never cometh weariness nor woe,
Where never discords mar that sweetest song,
Where never sorrows touch that white robed throng.

It comes to me
So strong at times I could cry out in pain,
A longing, vast, unspeakable—but vain;
That I can see.

For in my day I have my work to do,
My mite to give to aid the good and true,
My corner of the field to dress for Him,
Even till my hands grow weak, my eyes grow dim,
And then, ah then!
The vision of His coming is so sweet!
Shall I fall down I wonder at His feet?
And say again,
What here on earth has been my constant cry,
My Master, I am so unworthy; why
Art Thou so tender with Thy sinful child?
I have not been like Thee, meek, lowly, mild.

Sure Thou hast known
How I have striven 'gainst Divinest will?
How I have shunned Thy narrow way, and still
Pursued mine own.
Thou sawest how I made me idols here,
And worshipped them in blindness year by year;
And how when they were taken one by one,
I could not, would not say, "Thy will be done."
Yea, though I knew
How sweet it was for them to find Thy rest,

How sweet to leave a world where care oppressed,
And joys were few.
Then will there come, I wonder, on His face
A new, strange revelation of His grace;
And will He straight make answer unto me,
"I loved thee and gave Myself for thee."

I do not know—
But this I know, that when His time shall come,
To call another weary pilgrim home,
That I shall go
To meet my Master yonder face to face,
To taste in full the riches of His grace,
To learn the meaning of this earthly life,
The wherefore of this toil, and care, and strife.
It may be late
Before I hear Him coming at the door,
Before He calls me to the farther shore;
But I can wait,
For He will come,
To make the valley radiant with His smile,
He will say, "Daughter, come and rest awhile"
With Me at home.

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